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Contact: Michael Goergen
SAF Executive Vice President
(301) 938-4211

Nation's Foresters Call for Quick Action after Catastrophes

Washington, DC (November 3, 2005) – The Society of American Foresters (SAF) has called upon Congress to remove the hurdles preventing federal forest managers from acting quickly after catastrophic events.

Representative Greg Walden (R-OR), chairman of the House Resources, Forests and Forest Health Subcommittee along with Representatives Stephanie Herseth (D-SD) and Brian Baird (D-WA) have responded by introducing a bipartisan bill – Forest Emergency Recovery and Research Act – which will address the need for quick action after forest catastrophes like hurricanes, wildfire, ice storms, windstorms, and insect outbreaks.

The bill proposes a number of thoughtful and innovative ideas that will protect and recover the treasured national forests. Specifically, the bill would provide rapid assessments of damage following forest catastrophes, allow quick action where necessary to recover and reforest, strengthen research, and provide flexible funding to support the work of recovery and reforestation. It does this while maintaining current environmental laws and public involvement.

“We’ve got to get past the political posturing and actively pursue the hard work of recovering our forests,” says Michael Goergen, Executive Vice President of SAF. “Areas that have been hit hard by disasters take years and even decades to recover on their own. We can do better than that.”

Every year, on average more than five million acres of forests burn in wildfires. In 2003, insects or disease severely impacted 12 million acres of forests up from more than six million in 2002. Additionally hurricanes have left a major footprint on forests in Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, Texas, and Florida this year. Catastrophic events will forever alter our forests, but we can bring them back with timely and thoughtful science-informed action.

Delaying recovery in most cases causes further damage to the resource – water, wildlife, and forests. Federal managers must struggle through a morass of lengthy and redundant analyses, appeals, and litigation before they can act.

“Our foresters are highly educated and skilled people,” said Goergen, “We can trust them to do the right thing.”

To view a full-color forestry photo essay on the value of restoring America’s forests, visit the SAF web site at <http://www.safnet.org/policyandpress/forestrecovery.cfm>.

SAF represents over 15,000 forestry professionals working in colleges and universities, local, state and federal government, private industry, and as consultants. SAF members are leaders in providing credible science and professional management of forest resources, conducting targeted research, and creating relevant policies to ensure our forests are growing better all the time. For more information, contact SAF at (301) 897-8720 or visit the web at www.safnet.org.